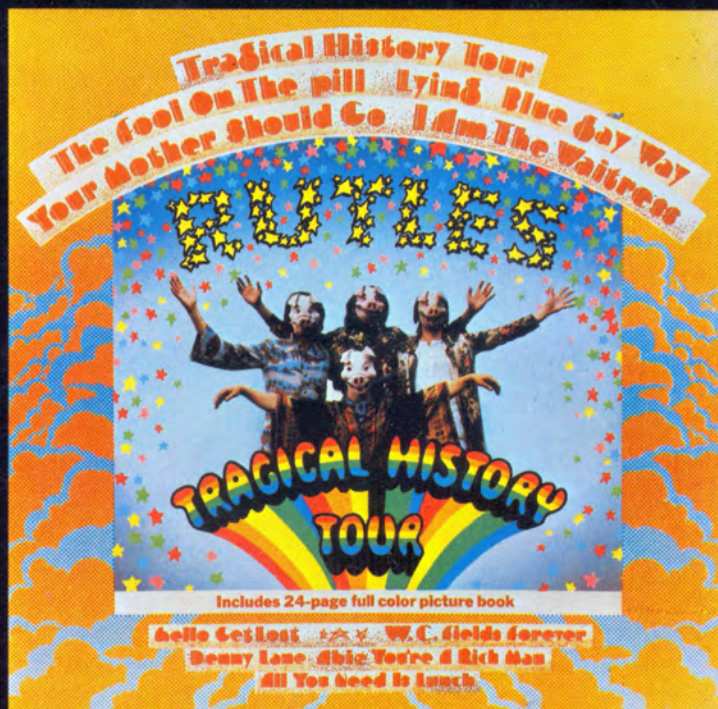


RUTLEMANIA



meet
the
rutles

stereo



LET IT ROT



"At last... The Rutles return to glory."



"Most of all, the *Rutles* celebrates an entire era without slipping into parody or maudlin sentimentality. Like the Beatles' best work, much of the *Rutles* is sparked by a desire to create music that is fun. Indeed, the brilliantly conceived booklet which accompanies the LP suggests that the upcoming *Rutles* TV special should be one howling larf."



MICHAEL J. FERGUSON

RECORDS

We love you Beatles...
whoever you are.

THE BEATLES REVIVAL BAND
(Telefunken Import)
BEATLEMANIA/ORIGINAL
SOUNDTRACK (Arista 8501)
THE RUTLES (Warner Bros. HS 3151)

Despite the fact that they separated in 1970, the spectre of the Beatles — and the youthful escapism they offered — hangs over the current rock culture like an original sin. The great disappointment of modern rock 'n' roll has been their failure to reunite, their apparent refusal to give us one more fling with the nostalgic 60s. Instead, the four went in different directions, creating work increasingly inferior to their halcyon period. Perhaps the greatest phenomenon in show business show business history, they have remained a public obsession years after their demise.

In the early part of the 70s, the need to re-experience the Beatles was not quite so desperate, as their individual intentions were uncertain and the possibility of reformation not so remote. However, as time wore on and rock music deteriorated into a massive, sprawling, complex business, the need for messiahs grew more intense. With the conspicuous absence of actual Beatles, it finally became necessary to accept

surrogates. Because of this, travesties like the Beatles Revival Band and *Beatlemania* (with a surely abortive Sgt. Pepper soon to follow) are upon us like a plague.

Theoretically, such exercises in blatant nostalgia seem harmless and even welcome. But to see such projects handled without a modicum of style, enthusiasm, or regard for the original is tantamount to musical treason. This is not to say that the Beatles should be treated as untouchables, but that revivals should attempt to generate a similar spirit. On record, at least, these two projects are flat, restrictive and pallid.

The Beatles Revival Band is the most offensive, but also the most harmless, as they come from Germany and are available only on an obscure import LP. Recorded live, it vainly tries to offer a potpourri of hits spanning the Fab Four's career in a sweaty, stimulating atmosphere. Seemingly wanting to capture a mood like *The Beatles In Hamburg* the Revival Band sound most like a third-rate garage band playing a wedding or church social. These guys don't even sound like they enjoy this music — the performances are lumbering and dull. Flush these fakes immediately!

Although they benefit from a far more professional presentation, the primary participants on the original soundtrack of *Beatlemania* hardly fare better. Recorded during an actual performance, the album moves through all phases of the Beatles' musical life. While the chronology might be correct, once again the finished project lacks any genuine excitement. Performing like programmed robots, the fellows who portray the Beatles come very close to turning the whole affair into parody. Only Paul McCartney is represented adequately and that's because his facile, syrupy style is the most easily imitated. The quirky idiosyncrasies of John, Ringo and even George aren't assimilated so easily and sometimes cause unintentional satire.

As such, it's interesting and useless stuff. Who will play this record and for what reason? As a memento of the play? One would hope that the experience would result in a desire to play *Beatle*

records rather than these cloned monkeys.

Fortunately, this dismal pair of Beatle-inspired releases is redeemed by those lovable mop-tops themselves, the band we've known for all these years... the Rutles. That's right, those famous hit-makers who've given us such memorable melodies as *Meet the Rutles*, *Tragical History Tour* and *Let It Rot* are back with a record that covers all phases of their career. No mere walk down memory lane, however, they've combined many familiar tunes to produce new material such as "Hold My Hand," "OUCH!" and "Cheese and Onions."

Overseen by the production team of Monty and Python, Rutles Dirk, Ron, Stig and Barry present a pastiche of styles, attitudes and ideas. What sets them apart from rip-offs like *Beatlemania* is that the verve and brashness of the original music is being lovingly communicated. And not without a sense of humor, as the boys involved have been known to expose wicked wits. While the swipes are surprisingly tame (nothing quite so slashing as the *National Lampoon's* floggin' of Beatle John), they do nonetheless note the folly of taking psychedelic metaphysics too seriously.

Most of all, *The Rutles* celebrates an entire era without slipping into parody or maudlin sentimentality. Like the Beatles' best work, much of *The Rutles* is sparked by a desire to create music that is fun. (Indeed, the brilliantly conceived booklet which accompanies the LP suggests that the upcoming *Rutles* TV special should be one howling larf, something the pompous histrionic *Beatlemania* can't capture.) If we intend to continue this vicarious pursuit of the Beatles, it's hopeful that we'll choose those with the proper intentions over manufactured mush like *Beatlemania*. ■

"Sure, the Beatles were good, but now the world will know the Rutles were better."



The Rutles pose for a early 1960's publicity photograph. (left to right) Ron Nasty (played by Neil Innes), Stig O'Hara (Rikki Fataar), Dirk McQuickly (Eric Idle), and Barry Wom (John Halsey).

Rutlemania

Mystery of Beatles' predecessors solved

Marc Leeka

The Beatles and the Rutles have what appear to be remarkably similar careers and, to the untrained observer, the two could be interchanged indiscriminately in music history books. Since most music fans are thoroughly familiar with the four boys called the Beatles, let us focus instead on a few highlights in the career of their counterparts.

In 1963, after a lengthy history playing obscure Liverpool and Hamburg clubs, the Rutles achieved world fame with "Rut Me Do," "Twist and Shout," and "Please Rut Me." By December, 1963, the four lads had nineteen hits in the Top 20 and in the ensuing mass adulation Rutlemania was born.

Album after album followed, but it was the lifestyle of the quartet that brought the most attention. 1966 saw the biggest threat to the group's

career when, in a widely quoted interview, Nasty was reported to have claimed the Rutles were bigger than God, and went on to say God had never had a hit record. After countless Rutles albums had been torched, the ghastly mistake was clarified. Nasty, when talking to the slightly deaf journalist, simply stated the Rutles were bigger than Rod—Rod Stewart—and that Stewart would not blossom for years.

Three successful movies, *A Hard Day's Rut*, *OUCH!*, and *Yellow Submarine Sandwich* filled theaters with steadfast fans, but another scandal lay on the horizon. After trend-setting Bob Dylan introduced the group to tea in San Francisco, the drug references in the *Sgt. Rutter's Only Darts Club Band* album brought additional criticism from the press.

The Rutles' first commercial failure, a film titled *The Tragical History Tour*, which followed four

Oxford history professors on a walking tour of English tea shops, served to introduce dissension among the four musicians, and the direction the group would take was unclear.

One last picture, *Let it Rut*, followed the "Stig is dead" rumor and signalled the Rutles' last days. The group dissolved in December, 1970 when each member sued his three partners and Stig, still somewhat concerned over his untimely death, sued himself. The dream was over.

So why does the general population still imagine the Beatles were innovators in the face of a plethora of Rutle firsts? Perhaps, it is suggested, it was publicity. Until the release of this greatest hits history (side one covers the period 1962-67 and side two covers 1967-70), the Rutles' albums were unobtainable in America. A casual listen to *The Rutles* will convince even the most stalwart Beatles fan that John, Paul, George and Ringo's inspiration certainly came from the original Fab Four from England's smallest county, Rutland.

A massive media campaign is now underway to educate the misinformed. A television special, starring the Rutles with the *Saturday Night Live* cast and other distinguished performers, will air March 22 to help clear the confusion. Before the program, however, I suggest a close examination of this thoroughly entertaining album, which is included as a bonus with the 20-page scrapbook.

My personal opinion is obvious from the slant of this review. It's high time that the Beatles be removed from our primary schools and the truth inscribed in these youngsters' textbooks: the Rutles *did* come first. Sure, the Beatles were good, but now the world will know the Rutles were better.

"The record, itself, is even more incredible. Each of the 14 songs closely adheres to one or two actual Beatle songs, while keeping enough of a distinction to avoid a lawsuit (a la 'My Sweet Lord')"

The Rutles Good For A Laugh, But Just Once

By BOB LONGINO

First there was The Beatles, then The Rolling Stones, The Bay City Rollers, The Sex Pistols and now, jolly old England is sending The Rutles our way. The Rutles?

Well, considering that the groups mentioned arrived on American soil in descending order as to musical quality, it is more than fitting that The Rutles come last. The Pre-Fab Four are the definitive rock 'n' roll group — four merry, madcap, mop-haired boys who look kind of like The Beatles, sound kind of like The Beatles and act kind of like The Beatles, most of the time.

The brainchild of ex-Monty Python member Eric Idle, The Rutles first made an appearance on British television a few years back, then on a "Saturday Night Live" segment as a replacement for Lorne Michael's offer for The Beatles to get back together, and now on a one and a half hour so-called documentary, entitled "All You Need Is Cash," to be shown Wednesday at 9:30 p.m. on NBC.

Being a parody of The Beatles, The Rutles are more a one-time novelty act for an occasional side-splitting laugh than any permanent fixture in the leftover sixties influence.

The group's alleged albums include "Meet The Rutles," "Tragical History Tour," "St. Rutters Darts Club Band" and "Let It Rot." They have several movies including "A Hard Day's Rut," "Ouch!" and "Yellow Submarine Sandwich." You see what I mean.

This antithesis of the one superstar hero group of the



THE RUTLES

(L To R) Barry, Nasty, Dirk, Stig

sixties has one real album, "The Rutles," released by Warner Brothers. It follows the format of the documentary with a 20-page book and sports a disc with 10 Rutles' classics like "Hold My Hand," "Cheese And Onions," "Double Back Alley" and "Piggy In The Middle," all written by Neil Innes of the Bonzo Dog Band. They are all good for a laugh, but just one time.

Actually, there hasn't been a musical joke quite like The Rutles since P.D.Q. Bach first made his appearance on the classical scene many moons ago. But whereas Bach has an entire repertoire of many masters to spoof, The Rutles are limited to but one trick — and it shows.

"All You Need Is Cash" is hilarious at times,

humorous at times, and boring most of the time. After the initial giggles wear off of seeing Dirk, Nasty, Stig and Barry, after a few bars of music, and after a few jokes, it all becomes too repetitious. And only the most astute Beatle trivia expert can catch the constant underlying jabs at Paul, John, George and Ringo.

At their funniest, the Pre-Fab Four perform basic Beatle antics in clips from "A Hard Day's Rut" and "Ouch!" They are humorous during segments about "the fifth Rutle," Nasty claiming the group is bigger than God (when he actually meant Rod — as in Stewart), their admission at taking "tea," and the ugly rumor of Stig's death.

But the entire endeavor needs editing badly. Every minute detail of the Beatles' lives are dissected and parodied. At times, the slaps hit too close to home, challenging that entire mass of air of wonder that surrounded the Fab Four. "All You Need Is Cash" would be a better presentation as small, short skits in a 30-minute show or as a story line in Lampoon. Frankly, the album and 20-page book for a 15-minute look and listen was enough.

If "All You Need Is Cash" does anything constructive, it does chip away small bits of Beatle mystique without bursting the bubble. As one watches, it becomes a lot easier to see the real Beatles as people, which makes their "antics" and Oulja Board-like faith excursion clear.

However, any worthwhile submergence into the Beatle phenomenon would have been better spent in a true life documentary, which happens to be exactly what we all want to see anyway.

"And the Rutles sound much more like the Beatles than the cast of 'Beatlemania.'"

The Rutles

by steve wynn

They look like the Beatles, act like the Beatles and sound like the Beatles, but the RUTLES (a.k.a. the Fab Four) have more albums (1) and television specials (1) premiering this month than the Beatles do. Here's a photo of Ron, Stig, Dirk and Barry taken before the Rutles became a "legend that will last a lunchtime."

THE RUTLES

Warner Bros HS 3151

The last couple of years haven't been easy for Beatle fans. Between the endless random rearrangements of Beatle songs into nostalgic

greatest hits packages, the "Klaatu is really the Beatles" hype, and all the recent fuss over the play "Beatlemania" (which has produced one of the most popular cover bands ever), it appears that people are still trying to squeeze as much as possible from the Fab Four of the sixties.

After all that, the Rutles are a welcome band.

The Rutles? Of course, you've heard of them. The pre-fab four. Ron, Stig, Dirk, and Barry. Hits like "A Hard Day's Rut," "Ouch!" "Tragical History Tour" and "Let It Rot." Then there was the famous concert at Che Stadium or the notorious "Stig is dead" rumors.

Is this a put-on? Nope. The Rutles are for real. They made their American television debut on Saturday Night Live last year and next Wednesday evening NBC will air a 90-minute special "All You Need Is Cash" which will tell the history of the Rutles.

The man behind the Rutles

is Monty Python's Eric Idle (alias Rutle bassist Dirk McQuickly). Idle doesn't play on the album, but he was the key figure in assembling the 20-page book that comes with the LP (the cover of the album says, "Free record with this 20-page book"). This booklet is outstanding, as it tells the history of the Rutles with carefully satirical photographs and a hilarious biography.

The record, itself, is even more incredible. Each of the 14 songs closely adheres to one or two actual Beatle songs, while keeping enough of a distinction to avoid a lawsuit (a la "My Sweet Lord?")

And the Rutles sound much more like the Beatles than the cast of "Beatlemania" or maybe even the Beatles themselves. Similarities go past the lyrics and melodies; the harmonies, arrangements, solos, orchestration and even reverse tape effects (which

actually say something when played backwards) are perfect.

Neil Innes is to the record, what Eric Idle was to the booklet. Innes, a former member of the defunct Bonzo Dog Band, wrote every song, produced the LP, and (as Ron Nasty) does the most outstanding imitation of John Lennon since Tony Hendra's interpretation on National Lampoon's "Radio Dinner."

The two sides of this album are neatly divided into two periods: 1962-67 and 1967-70 (Pretty original, huh?) Side One opens with the same jet sounds that opened "Back In the USSR," followed by a lopsided 1-2-3-4, and then "Hold My Hand," a.k.a. "All My Loving."

After "Hold My Hand," the side weaves through satires of "Twist and Shout," "If I Fell," "Don't Pass Me By," "All You Need Is Love," and George Harrison's "Love You To" (with sitar, of course).

Side two is even more

specific, with every song directly relating to one Beatle tune. There's "Doubleback Alley" ("Penny Lane") "Cheese And Onions" ("A Day In The Life") and the album's masterpiece "Piggy In The Middle" ("I Am the Walrus.")

"Piggy In The Middle" is incredible. Innes is at his best on the Lennon-ish vocals, keyboards and especially lyrics: ("I know you know/what you know but/You should know by/now that you're not me./Talk about a month of Sundays...Hey diddle diddle/The cat and the fiddle/Piggy in the middle/Do a pooh pooh.")

Maybe that's what makes this album so much fun and all the other imitations so ridiculous. This album has a playful sense of humor, just like the Beatles did. No serious, deep, idolizing devotions here. Just invention, silliness and fun.

That's the way I'd like to remember the Beatles. (SW)

"The ensuing performance of 'Hold My Hand' is like the remaining 13 tunes penned and arranged by Neil Innes, portraying 'Nasty' (erstwhile, John Lennon), a blending of style, lyric and guitar riff reminiscent of a specific period in Beatle music—but not a carbon copy. There is no mindless 'Beatlemania' copying, but brilliant Beatle-like creativity."



TELEVISION REVIEW

Rutles Demolish Mythology As the 4 Beatles Couldn't

The Rutles: "All You Need Is Cash," 90 minutes March 22, NBC-TV. Produced by Gary Weiss and Craig Kellern; directed by Gary Weiss and Eric Idle; music and lyrics by Neil Innes. Executive producer, Lorne Michaels.

LOS ANGELES—Writer Eric Idle, on parole from Monty Python's asylum, has accomplished for the Beatles what they have been frustrated in doing since their disbandment: demolition of their own mythology. Idle's success was due to the madness of his method—laughter, created by the slickest piece of parody this side of "Saturday Night Live."

Through creation of four fantasy moppets who rise to musical infamy from the pits of Rutland, England's smallest county, Idle warps the Beatles saga into a recognizable if "rot-

ted" tale.

Masterfully aged and composited tape and photos allow us to follow the Rutles through their Hamburg "Rat Keller" stint, which claimed the fifth Rutle who merely "stood at the back," to their triumphant first appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show.

This single segment, in which the original Sullivan footage is used for the intro—a simple but effective subbing of "Rutles" for "Beatles" making all the difference—marks the show as a masterpiece. The ensuing performance of "Hold My Hand" is

like the remaining 13 tunes penned and arranged by Neil Innes, portraying "Nasty" (erstwhile, John Lennon), a blending of style, lyric and guitar riff reminiscent of a specific period in Beatle music—but not a carbon copy. There is no mindless "Beatlemania" copying, but brilliant Beatle-like creativity, though distilled through a glass mirthfully.

Woven into the storyline are the Beatles films as made by the Rutles—and cut-for-cut, the "clips" almost duplicate scenes from the originals, including an impressive animation satire of "Yellow Submarine."

Idle himself portrays "Dirk" (Paul McCartney), whose stage movements and cherubish exuberance match those of his model, though not to the uncanny extent achieved by Innes' cloning of Lennon... or is it clowning?

Ricky Fataar is quietly effective as "Stig," the George Harrison role, and John Halsey as "Barry" brilliantly copies the plodding underdog role of Ringo Starr.

Idle tells the entire story, through its inevitable ending with the Rutles final LP, "Let It Rot," as an abrasive roving reporter, desperately trying to build some documentary meaning into the "pre-fab four's" rise. Cameos by Mick and Bianca Jagger, Paul Simon and George Harrison are complemented by those of "Saturday Night Live" regulars Dan Aykroyd, John Belushi, Bill Murray and Gilda Radner.

Indeed, the frantic digging by Idle as the reporter makes his point better than the nifty musical parodies or excellent script: Searching for meaning in the Beatles mythology is, as the original foursome has claimed all along, madness... and worthy of a good laugh. **RAY HERBECK JR.**

"On it are 14 tunes crafted by Innes in a decidedly Beatle vein. Some sound surprisingly authentic; some do not. But all are fun, especially lyrically."

'Rutlemania': The way it wasn't

By Matt Aragorn Pavin

When was the last time a record album made you laugh ... before you'd even heard it?

Imagine a parallel universe in which the Beatles never existed. Imagine, instead, a group called the Rutles ... and, of course, Rutlemania.

This is exactly what Eric Idle (formerly of Monty Python's Flying Circus) and Neil Innes (of Bonzo Dog Band fame) did. Such a preposterous idea was it that not only is there now available a delightful disc "The Rutles," but also "All You Need Is Cash," a

Band," "Let It Rot," and "Tragical History Tour." The latter is highlighted by such favorites as "The Fool on the Pill," "Your Mother Should Go," "Hello Get Lost," and "W. C. Fields Forever" — all slight distortions of the Beatles' original titles.

In between the covers is a 20-page booklet of Rutle memorabilia, including photographs (duplicating famous Beatle poses) and a prose chronology (paralleling that of the Beatles). A few excerpts further explain the disc's pre-musical appeal.

"In those days there was a fifth Rutle — Leppo ... his influence on the other Rutles was so immeasurable that no one has ever bothered to measure it.

"Archie Macaw was the first A/R man to take an interest: 'One day this rather odd chap hopped into my office. He'd been to see virtually everyone in the business and been shown the door. He asked to see my door, but I wouldn't show it to him. Instead he showed me the tapes of the Rutles.

"In 1966 the Rutles faced the biggest threat to their careers. Nasty (John Lennon) in a widely quoted interview apparently had claimed that the Rutles were bigger than God. ... Many fans burned their fingers attempting to burn their albums. Album sales skyrocketed. People were buying them just to burn them.

"Stig (George Harrison cleverly confused with Dirk, or Paul McCartney), meanwhile, had hidden in the background so much that in 1969 a rumor went around that he was dead. Several so-called 'facts' helped the emergence of this rumor. ... Thirdly, Nasty supposedly sings 'I Buried Stig' on 'I Am the Waitress' (wrong song). In fact, he sings 'E burres stigano' which is very bad Spanish for 'Have you a water buffalo?' ... And finally, if you sing the title of 'Sgt. Rutters Only Darts Club Band' (also wrong) backwards, it is supposed to sound very like 'Stig has been dead for ages honestly.' In fact it sounds uncannily like 'dnab bulc strad ylna srettur tnaegres.'

"In the midst of this legal wrangling (over the dissolution of Rutle — or Apple — Corps), 'Let It Rot' was released as a film, an album, and a lawsuit. ... In December, 1970, Dirk sued Stig and Nasty; Barry (Ringo Starr) sued Dirk; Nasty sued Stig and Barry; and Stig sued himself accidentally."

And so on. As the promotional sticker on the front cover of the album promises, there is a free record with the 20-page booklet.

On it are 14 tunes crafted by Innes in a decidedly Beatle vein. Some sound surprisingly authentic; some do not. But all are fun, especially lyrically.

Many enjoyable hours can be spent searching out what Beatle songs have been

nicked. Often there is more than one per selection. To give you an idea of what "The Rutles" album sounds like and not spoil your detecting, here are just some of the obvious.

Side one is devoted to the years 1962-1967. "Hold My Hand" combines bits of "Eight Days a Week," "All My Loving," and "I Need You;" "Number One" imitates "Twist and Shout" (which was not even written by the Beatles); "With a Girl Like You" borrows from "If I Fell;" "Ouch" is Rutlish for "Help;" "Live in Hope" owes much to "Octopus's Garden;" "Love Life" is "All You Need Is Love" revisited; and, "Nevertheless" is a take-off of "Within You Without You."

The second side, which is a trifle weaker than its predecessor, centers on the period from 1967-1970. "Good Times Roll" mimics "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds;" "Doubleback Alley" is reminiscent of "Penny Lane;" "Another Day" (no relation to McCartney's post-Beatles effort of the same name) harks back to "Martha My Dear;" "Piggy in the Middle" parodies "I Am the Walrus;" and, "Let's Be Natural" is indebted to "Julia."

Even though there is still plenty more to discover, by the time all is revealed, the listener will have found himself in a rut ... or into the Rutles. Rutlemania — the way it wasn't. Or Rutlemania — the way it will be.

Music



television special that will air on Wednesday at 9:30 p.m. on Channel 4.

On the album's back cover is background information that puts the entire project into its proper perspective: "The Rutles story is ... a living legend. A legend that will last a lifetime, long after lots of other living legends have died. The Warner Brothers (Stan and Reg) are proud to present this tribute to the group who made the sixties what they are today — the Prefab Four."

On the front cover are four old Beatle covers done Rutle style: "Meet The Rutles," "Sgt. Rutters Only Darts Club

"The attention to both minute musical detail and overall spirit in these Beatles facsimiles is impressive, but not unexpected by fans of the departed Bonzo Dog Band, whose Neil Innes wrote and produced the Rutles music. Innes' flair for parody and for pure, mid-'60s British pop is ideally suited for this assignment, and his uncanny mastery of every key element of the Beatles' various sounds is the album's primary virtue."

Rutles: Liverpool's 'Prefab Four'

BY RICHARD CROMELIN



"All You Need Is Cash." The Rutles. Warner Bros. HS3151.

● If you listen to the album's opening cut with just half an ear, the bouyant vocals, the rousing "yeah yeah yeah" and the quickly identifiable melody leave no doubt about the band you're hearing. Farther along, a medium-tempo ballad features the acoustic arrangement, 12-string solo and distinctive harmony we all know. Later, you can almost see the big, sad eyes of the underdog drummer as he gamely struggles with a melody.

But it's Barry Wom, not Ringo Starr, and the songs are "Hold My Hand" and "With a Girl Like You," not "All My Loving" and "If I Fell." The group is the Rutles, Liverpool's "prefab four" and the subject of Wednesday's Monty-Python-meets-Saturday Night Live special on NBC. While the "Beatlemania" soundtrack album feeds today's continuing preoccupation with the Beatles, the "Cash" soundtrack kicks it in the pants.

As the album proceeds chronologically, the perpetrators' tongues inch toward their cheeks. "Doubleback Alley," finds nostalgia a strain ("In my mind I see/Happy smiling faces/If I flog my memory") and the neighbors less savory than those in "Penny Lane." Rutles guitarist Stig O'Hara wields sitar and platitudes with a droning vengeance ("We're here today and gone tomorrow/Nevertheless make the most of it.") Abstract, poetic imagery is reduced to psychedelic gibberish.

The attention to both minute musical detail and overall spirit in these Beatles facsimiles is impressive, but not unexpected by fans of the departed Bonzo Dog

Band, whose Neil Innes wrote and produced the Rutles music. Innes' flair for parody and for pure, mid-'60s British pop is ideally suited for this assignment, and his uncanny mastery of every key element of the Beatles' various sounds is the album's primary virtue.

Innes didn't take the easy way out in approaching the Beatles material. Instead of devising carbon-copy lampoons, he tied familiar hooks to original songs, equivalents that lie in varying degrees of proximity to their sources. At the same time, what might have been strictly a novelty offers a little something more.

Spoofery aside, "Cash" contains some words and music with inherent, nonparodic values, both serious and (mostly) comic. In "Good Times Roll" (nee "Lucy in the Sky"), the Rutles observes: "Like ice in a drink/Invisible ink/Or dreams in the cold light of day/The children of rock and roll/Never grow old/They just fade away."

The album's point of view lies in its treatment of the Beatles' musical periods. Innes seems to have considerable respect for the early, naive pop singles, and draws the sabre only when faced with the later, more complex music.

In that sense, "Cash" 's target is not only the popular quartet, but its generation's movement from innocence to indulgence. The entire Rutles undertaking, meantime, aims more at the current obsession with the Beatles than at the group itself. Ironically, the public's appetite for Beatles music is so voracious that it might easily ignore the irreverence and turn to these handsome surrogates. Better this than "Beatlemania." ●

—RICHARD CROMELIN

"The show won't need to run on the merit of its cast, since the music will sound a lot like the Beatles, and perhaps a little better in some areas."

Rutlemania On Its Way



By Ellen Zoe Golden

They say imitation is the best form of flattery, and that's probably what The Rutles had in mind when they set out to repeat musical history.

Seems The Rutles, who call themselves the "Prefab Four" have modeled their music, hair, and history in a parallel line to the "Fab Four" Beatles. It was all the idea of Eric Idle, formerly of Monty Python, and Neil Innes, formerly of the Bonzo Band, and they took it to extremes by writing about the band's supposed beginnings in Liverpool up until their demise album "*Let It Rot*."

The story goes on to tell us about a fifth Rutle named Leppo "who mainly stood in the back...For fifteen months, night after night, they played the Rat Keller (in Hamburg) before they finally escaped and returned to Liverpool. In the rush they lost Leppo. He had crawled into a trunk with a small German Fraulein and was never seen again.

In this stage, which led them to their most successful manager Leggy Mountbatten, they had short mop-top haircuts and wore tight trousers, which caught the attention of everybody. Rutlemania was born.

"In 1964 the Rutles made the all-important breakthrough in America," the history says. "10,000 screaming fans were at Kennedy Airport to greet them. Unfortunately the Rutles arrived at La Guardia."

"Nevertheless the next day 73 million people watched them perform live on the Ed Sullivan Show. To all intents and purposes the Rutles had conquered the world."

As can be noticed, the history reeks of The Beatles. The release of *A Hard Days Rut*; *The Rutles*, *Ouch*; *Sgt. Rutters Darts*. Club Bands came next. *Sgt. Rutters* was released coupled with reports of Nasty claiming "the Rutles were bigger than Rod (Stewart)," which the press misconstrued for "the Rutles were bigger than God."

The next scandal revealed that the Rutles drink tea, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

After the loss of Leggy (seems he

had "accepted a teaching post in Australia") their first major flop was *The Tragical History Tour* (movie and album), followed by the more successful movie *Yellow Submarine Sandwich*. *Shabby Road* followed and contained one of the clues that Stig was dead. Seems he wasn't wearing any pants which The Rutles say is an Italian way of indicating death.

The rumors began to fly: Nasty supposedly sings "I buried Stig" on I Am the Waitress, The Sergeant Rutter Album pictures Nasty leaning in the exact position of a dying Yeti, and finally, if the title of Sergeant Rutter's Only Darts Club Band is sung backwards, it is supposed to sound very much like "Stig has been dead for ages honestly." "In fact it sounds uncannily like 'yltsenoh sega rof daed neeb sah gitS'" we are told.

The history is ended with all of the Rutles at each other's legal throat. their final album: *Let It Rot*, which showed the Rutles as unhappy, tired and worn-out, was not a good sign for the music world. Rutlemania had been smoldered.

This detailed history is sold complete with an album of The Rutles greatest hits, which in all actuality is the soundtrack from a television special about the band entitled "All You Need Is Cash." It is scheduled to air on NBC on March 22.

The cast will include The Rutles: Idle as Dirk McQuickly, Innes as Ron Nasty, Rikki Fataar as Stig O'Hara, and John Halsey as Barry Wom. Also to be included are Danny Aykroyd, John Belush, Ron Wood, Gilda Radner, George Harrison, Mick and Bianca Jagger and Paul Simon.

The show won't need to run on the merit of its cast, since the music will sound a lot like the Beatles, and perhaps a little better in some areas. The television audience will be able to hear such classics as *Ouch!* (Help!), *Piggy In The Middle*, (I Am The Walrus), and *Doubleback Alley* (Penny Lane). It will be time again to become familiarized with the once history changing sounds of the Beatles.

"Neil Innes has managed to capture the Beatles' sound as convincingly as Todd Rundgren did on his FAITHFUL album, and with more purpose."

"Now I'm a newly converted sucker for the Rutles."



All You Need is Cash: Sgt. Rutter's Dart Club Band

Music/by Jerry Lazar

MAGICAL HISTORY TOUR

Let's confess right up front here that when it comes to the Beatles a bigger sucker than me will not be found. Friends will flip through my albums, come to Harrison's *Wonderwall* or Lennon's *Two Virgins* . . . and you should see the looks. At least, I rationalize, I own only three of the twenty-odd virtually identical *Let It Be* bootlegs, and I never got duped into buying albums of Beatle songs by rip-off groups like the Liverpools. OK. OK. So I did shell out good money for *Best of The Beatles*, having been conned

by the pre-Ringo shot. Talk about your first-on-the-block! As you probably know, the drummer in those days was a gent name of Pete Best. And this is his solo album. Get it? *Best of the Beatles*? I've since seen him on *What's My Line?*, where I was pleased to discover that he's become a baker in Liverpool. Good for you, Petey! I've hung onto your album, though; quite a little collector's item, isn't it? That and *Wonderwall*.

By now, of course, I've figured out where to draw the line on these mat-

ters. A fan, yes; a fanatic, no. For instance, you won't find me plunking down \$15 to see this Broadway play (!) *Beatlemania*, or any other artificial imitation Beatle-flavored product. Nonetheless, the show has found its market; it has just opened in Los Angeles and supposedly has plans to clone itself all over the place. Clive Davis' Arista Records has even brought out an \$11.98 *Beatlemania* double album, which bears the warning: "An incredible simulation." (Look up the meaning of "incredible" when you get a chance.) I haven't heard the album, but I'll bet anything it sounds quite a bit like the Liverpools, as I remember them. They, too, made my teeth itch.

No need to despair, though, for there are a few new Beatle bargains to be had. One is the complete *A Hard Day's Night* screenplay, recently published by Penguin Books (\$6.95). I was overjoyed to see it—not for its shot-by-shot stills, not for its lengthy interview with director Richard Lester, but for its page 62. There, as I had been trying to tell everyone for years, is the scene, right near the beginning, in which Lennon is *snorting a bottle of Coke*. In 1964! How hip! How cool! How ahead! I was ecstatic.

Even bigger treats are to be found in the genre of revisionism. When I came across the book *Paperback Writer* last spring, I didn't realize at first it was a novel, because it was subtitled *A New History Of The Beatles*. But the author's disclaimer was the tip-off: "Just because there'll never be another Beatles doesn't necessarily mean there can't be another Beatles' story." Early in the first chapter we read the part about a young plumber named Brian Epstein who is called in late one night to repair a clogged pipe in the ladies room at the Cavern. From there we get a fairly funny account of the four rockers as we *might have* known and loved them. The plane of reality is tilted at odd angles:

Dylan instructs a worshipful Lennon and a cynical McCartney in the art of writing lyrics: "Words and phrases . . . the first thing that comes to your mind . . . I don't even know what my songs mean." The result of the trio's collaboration is "Pneumonia Ceilings," typed on London Hilton stationery—except for the last line, which

everyone is too stoned to remember.

Backstage at the Sullivan show, George tries out a new song for Del Shannon, who wasn't even aware that George wrote any: "Sounds to me like that song the Chiffons had out last year," comments Shannon. "Sounds just like it. Same changes."

Mark Shipper, the author, is a 28-year-old assistant publisher of a weekly trade paper, *Radio and Records*. He tapped out *Paperback Writer* in six weeks and, investing his own savings, printed 500 copies, which he tried to sell by mail order for \$5.95 a pop. One copy came to the attention of Fred Jordan, who now has his own imprint at Grosset & Dunlap. Jordan plans to publish it as a large-format trade paperback in June. He's billing it as the first real rock novel ever written, but Shipper is more realistic. "It's just meant to be fun," he says.

Then we have the Rutles. You heard right: the Rutles. Ron Nasty, Dirk McQuickly, Stig O'Hara and Barry Wom—otherwise known as the Prefab Four. If you don't already know their tale—"the legend that will last a lunchtime"—then you can tune in on March 22 to NBC's documentary *All You Need Is Cash*, which was filmed last summer by Eric Idle and Gary Weis. *Saturday Night Live* and Monty Python meet the Beatles. Sort of.

Idle—who created, wrote and narrates the program—is Rutle bassist McQuickly. Neil Innes, of Bonzo Dog Band fame, wrote the lyrics and composed the Rutles tunes. (He's also Lennon sound-alike Ron Nasty.) Rikki Fataar, who once toured with the Beach Boys, is Stig. John Halsey, whom I never heard of before, is drummer Barry. A handful of the *Saturday Night* crew have cameo parts, and even Mick Jagger and Paul Simon were persuaded to come on camera to describe what effect the Rutles had on *their* careers.

Mark Shipper and Eric Idle have separately and independently recreated the Beatles era using roughly the same idiom, if not the same medium. Shipper puts his Beatles through episodes that, had this been an even zanier world, *might* have happened. He rewrites Beatles lyrics and titles. Idle goes one step further: he changes *all* the names; and Innes rewrites the music as well. It doesn't sound like a par-

ticularly funny concept (or even an original one; remember AM deejays cracking themselves up by singing "I Wanna Hold My Nose"?), but it works. It works because of its underlying attitude: it's not analytical or imitative or grandiose. It's just meant to be fun.

I find myself telling skeptical friends to be sure to catch this special, and I try to give them an idea of what makes the Rutles so good by singing one of their songs, like "Get Up and Go" (the "Get Back" takeoff) or, better, "OUCH!" the title cut of their second movie. ("Ouch! Please don't hurt me. Ouch! Don't desert me. Ouch!") Neil Innes has managed to capture the Beatles' sound as convincingly as Todd Rundgren did on his *Faithful* album, and with more purpose. Enriching the spoof of the Beatles (and of our collective reaction to them) is a marvelous send-up of the entire genre of television documentaries: their cost, language and camera techniques.

Watching the Rutles, one is struck by the number of Beatle images that have permanently implanted themselves in our brainpans and by how accurately they are recreated here. Film editor Aviva Slesin, who put in three months of 14-hour days on this project, has done a masterful job of capturing the madness and bounciness of the original Richard Lester films; and the *Yellow Submarine* parody is indistinguishable from the real thing. Even the press conference sequences do justice to their prototypes. (Q: "Did you feel better after seeing the Queen?" A: "No. I feel better after seeing a doctor.")

Of course, it's tough to ridicule the inherently ridiculous. Sometimes real life can't be topped: Paul getting a hit single out of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" or George getting convicted of plagiarism. How do you beat that? When the Rutles try to go real life one better, it doesn't always work. I mean, why show John and Yoko holding forth for peace in a shower? Wasn't a bed absurd enough?

Meanwhile, George and Ringo are teaming up for a TV special (NBC, April 26) which is being touted as (good Christ!) a musical version of *The Prince and the Pauper*. I can't figure which is worse, this or the idea of a 1978 Beatles album with tunes like

"Disco Yoko," "Disco Love Songs," "My Sweet Disco" and Ringo's remake of "Disco Duck." I'm so glad the band packed it in when it did.

Now I'm a newly converted sucker for the Rutles. Their first (and last) album has just been released, and it's the genuine item. Where have these guys been all these years? ●

"The music, hauntingly reminiscent of that produced by the Beatles, was written by Neil Innes."

Pre-Fab Four keep idle working to stay out of rut



Tube Talk with Jeff Weingrad

IT'S BEEN ALMOST eight years since the Rutles separated, and more than a decade since their album *Sgt. Rutters Darts Club Band* stood the world on its ear, but the Pre-Fab Four, as they were known back in

their early Liverpool days are still as popular as they ever were.

The reason is simple.

"It's All You Need Is Cash," a documentary tracing the rise and demise of the group which — with its music and lifestyle — changed the course of the world forever. The show airs Wednesday at 9:30 p.m. on NBC.

Confused?

You think it's the Beatles.

No, it's the Rutles, but yes, they are a figment of the imagination. Eric Idle's imagination.

Idle, a member of Monty Python, the British satirical troupe, has written a mock documentary about a mop-top foursome from Liverpool. The group is a mirror image of the Beatles, but the mirror is a wee bit cracked. If this all sounds like a skit from *Saturday Night Live*, there may be a reason. The special is overrun with *Saturday Night* people, including filmmaker Gary Weis (producer, director), Lorne Michaels (executive producer) and almost all of the *Not Ready for Prime Time Players*.

You'll also see a lot of other familiar faces in it, including Mick Jagger, Paul Simon and, in disguise, former Beatle George Harrison.

Idle is a very pleasant bloke, and for one who makes a living in the funny business, he appears almost shockingly subdued.

He is, of course, very happy with the way the project worked out. He should be. It is a work that should bring smiles and laughs to anyone who is familiar with the story of the Beatles.

"It all comes from a small joke we had written for my Rutland Weekend TV show," Idle explained. "And then that piece on *Saturday Night* last year went down real well. It's a good idea and when I spoke to Lorne about it he said to do it for American TV. And that's been the last 15 months really."

The music, hauntingly reminiscent of that produced by the Beatles, was written by Neil Innes, who plays Nasty. The other Rutles are Dirk (Idle), Stig (Rikki Fataar) and Barry (John Halsey).

Some of the tunes you'll hear are "The Fool on the Pill," "Your Mother Should Go," and "Tragical History Tour." In fact, Warner Brothers has released a Rutles album, and some radio stations are already playing tunes from it.

"This was probably the most benevolent project I ever worked on," said the 34-year-old Idle. "Lots of fun. You know, people take things so seriously. This whole sainthood business. We just had some fun. Playing Beatles was a great feeling. I mean I feel the same about them as everybody of our generation."

Had Idle heard anything from any of the originals?

"I spoke with two of them," he said, breaking into a wide grin. "Ringo hasn't seen it yet, but he is anxious to. And George loved it. But he's been a big Rutles fan all along. He's a silly."

No one should confuse this movie with "Beatlemania," the Broadway show which has four actors impersonating the Beatles.

"We started before them, it has been a long time putting all this together. And we're certainly not copying the Beatles. That concept doesn't interest me. And I don't know why anyone would buy their album, especially when you can get the real thing," Idle laughed, "a Rutlemania album."

He was not entirely joking about Rutlemania.

"That's always been the one danger of this project," he said. "What will we do? Run away. But seriously. It has always been a joke and the nice thing with a joke is the timing. But that's it. It's a joke, enjoy it. You never do know though what will happen."

Along with his fellow Monty Pythoners, Idle is getting ready to make a film which he has spent the last year writing, in between working on the Rutles show.

"The word Brian will be in the title somewhere," he said. "You know it's really hard to describe Python. The film will be out in a year or so and it has nothing to do with the Beatles or the Rutles. You could say it's another costume drama."

Idle only laughed when asked if he thought there was any chance the Rutles would ever get back together.

"Neil Innes' 15 songs are equal to the mission, and then some. His composite, blatantly plagiarizing melodies will have Beatles nuts playing name-the-source constantly. Innes' lyrics meanwhile, brilliantly chart and mock the Beatles' major thematic phases—from teenage romanticism to emerging social awareness, to psychedelic freak-outs."



The Rutles: nostalgia goes bonkers

The Rutles' Tragical History tour is coming to take you away

Yeah, Yeah, Yeah

By JONATHAN TAKIFF

Only the musicians names (and song titles) have been changed, to better spoof the originals. Otherwise, "All You Need is Cash" is a devastatingly accurate parody of the 1960s musical sensations, The Beatles, that will titillate, tease and terrify Beatles buffs everywhere.

AIRING TOMORROW at 9:30 p.m. on Channel 3, the comedy special is the lunatic brainchild of Eric ("Monty Python") Idle and Neil (Bonzo Dog Band) Innes, British contemporaries and kindred spirits of the Beatles. In their breathless, you-are-there-when-it-happens "queasy docu-drama," the "Pre-Fab Four" are known as The Rutles — the mad-at-the-world Nasty, oh-so-cute Dirk, the "quiet one" Stig, and dumb and dumpy drummer Barry.

"The Rutles story is a legend. A living legend. A legend that will live a lifetime, long after lots of other living legends have died."

A bit of outrageous casting has Ricky Fataar, a genuine Indian (and one time Beach Boy) playing the George Harrison/Stig character — who always wished he was an Indian. Meanwhile, Harrison himself pops up as The Rutles press agent. So too, do a straight-faced Mick Jagger, recalling how the Rolling Stones were long considered "London's answer to the Rutles," and Paul Simon, waxing ecstatic about first hearing the "Sgt. Rutters Darts Club Band" album. "Saturday Night's" Bill Murray plays Murray The K. and John Belushi is brilliant as the gangster-like manager Ron Decline (Allen Klein.)

If you're one of the ten people who didn't know the Beatles at all, some of the inside jokes will surely seem a bit obscure. Remember the fifth Ruttle named Leppo, who worked with the lads early on at The Rat Keller in Hamburg? ("His influence on the other Rutles was so immeasurable that no one has ever bothered to measure it.") What attracts the Rutles manager to the boys isn't their music, we learn, but rather their trousers — their tight trousers. The

Rutles first American appearance is at Che Stadium, named for the Cuban guerilla leader Che Stadium. Nasty/John beds down with a Yoko-ish girl named Chastity, who dresses in full Nazi uniform.

A FANTASTIC (verging on neurotic) amount of care and detail work has gone into Lorne Michaels' production, to make it authentic. Settings, costumes, hair styles and Gary Weiss' camera angles perfectly mimic Beatles career landmarks: their first Ed Sullivan appearance, their Royal Command Performance (complete with yawning Queen Elizabeth), escapades with the Maharishi, plus all their really fab 'n gear films — "A Hard Day's Rut," "Ouch," the animated "Yellow Submarine Sandwich," "Tragical History Tour" and the cinema verite "Let It Rot."

Neil Innes' 15 songs are equal to the mission, and then some. His composite, blatantly plagiarizing melodies will have Beatles nuts playing name-the-source constantly. ("With a Girl Like You," for example, is virtually "If I Fell," and "Love Life" is "All You Need is Love.") Innes' lyrics, meanwhile, brilliantly chart and mock the Beatles' major thematic phases — from teenage romanticism, to emerging social awareness, to psychedelic freak-outs. ("Bible punching heavy weight evangelistic boxing kangaroo/Orang u tang and Anaconda Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse even Pluto, too.")

Blimcy, lads, it's a larf and a harf.

"Neil Innes, who penned the artful tunes, has certainly done his homework. The Rutles have arrived!"

TELEFILM REVIEW

All You Need Is Cash

(Wed., 9:30-11 p.m., NBC-TV)

Filmed in England and New Orleans by Rutle Corps Prods. Exec producer, Lorne Michaels; producers, Gary Weis, Craig Kellem; directors, Weis, Eric Idle; creator-writer, Eric Idle; camera, Weis; editors, Aviva Slesin, Colin Berwick; art director, Peta Button; sound, Tony Jackson, Bruce White; music, lyrics, Neil Innes.

Cast: Eric Idle, Neil Innes, John Halsey, Ricky Fataar, Mick Jagger, Paul Simon, George Harrison, Dan Aykroyd, John Belushi, Bill Murray, Gilda Radner, Bianca Jagger, Gwen Taylor, Carinthia West, Penelope Tree, Ron Wood, Jeanette Charles, Terence Bayler, Michael Palin, Frank Williams, Barry Cryer, Al Franken, Tom Davis, Jerome Green, Bob Gibson, Pat Perkins, Ollie Halsall, Bunny May, Robert Putt.

Anyone who thinks *The Beatles'* history isn't ripe for satire sure reckons without Monty Python Eric Idle, who dreamed up the idea, wrote it, codirected and plays two roles in the send up. Everyone concerned, from coproducers Gary Weis (who codirected) and Craig Kellem to Neil Innes, who penned the artful tunes, has certainly done his homework. The Rutles have arrived!

The Rutles (Idle as Dirk McQuickley, Innes as Ron Nasty, Rikki Fataar as Stig O'Hara, John Halsey as Barry Wom) are chronicled by a harassed tv announcer who traces the meeting of Nasty and McQuickley in a vacant lot and the addition of guitarist O'Hara, drummer

Wom (who really wanted to be a hairdresser) to create the "fabulous Rutle sound" and a "legend that will last a lunchtime."

There are the folk who are instrumental in helping The Rutles along their way to fame and whatever. Leggy Mountbatten (Terence Bayler), whose mom says Leggy was "always interested in young men," managed their careers until that went wrong; Bill Murray the K (Bill Murray), who tub-thumped in *Flushing, L.I.*; Rambling Orange Peel (Bob Gibson), down in New Orleans, where he claims to have invented the Rutle sound and his vigorous wife (Pat Perkins) immediately calls him a liar; George Hamilton as

an interviewer.

Paul Simon and Mick Jagger answer vaguely to the tv announcer's questions, and Bianca Jagger turns up as Martini, the girl McQuickley marries before he sinks into punk rock; Gwen Taylor is Chastity, the Nazi artist who marries Nasty before he turns his back on the world.

Celebrated moments in the Rutles' career include performances in Hamburg, a concert before a yawning Queen Elizabeth; American concerts and pushing crowds, films and LP's and the downhill run, lawsuits, and eventual breakup.

Much of "Cash" is inspired, and if 90 minutes seems overly long for satire, Beatlemania will find themselves tugged along at the irreverent look at a major force in contemporary music and in contemporary life modes.

Telefilm moves surely under the adept hands of directors Weis and Idle, and the show's most potent force — more potent than the humor, the tugs at nostalgia or the on-target observations — is the vitality. *Tone.*

"Innes' music and lyrics are indeed reminiscent and a deft shade shy of overtly incorporating McCartney and Lennon's creations."

TELEVISION REVIEW

All You Need Is Cash

NBC, March 22, 9:30-11 p.m.

Just when one might imagine every possible perspective regarding the phenomenal rise and retirement of the Beatles has been examined, along comes "All You Need Is Cash." Against all odds, the attempt is quite wacky but very successful. The focal point is a group called the Rutles, whose path to publicity, profits and problems directly mirrors the memories of their original counterparts. The Rutles make movies ("A Hard Day's Rut" and "Ouch"), in-

corporate (only instead of an apple, the symbol is a banana), embark upon a "Tragical History Tour" as well as that universally renowned animated feature dubbed "Yellow Submarine Sandwich."

The ensemble gathered to re-create these goofy goings-on range from established rock personalities — Mick Jagger and Paul Simon, for starters — to other equally adroit actors. The Rutles are composed of Eric Idle, Neil Innes, John Halsey and Ricky Fataar. Dan Aykroyd, John Belushi, Bill Murray and Gilda Radner — right, the Not Ready for Prime Time Players — cavort and confuse effectively. The same can also be said for Jeanette Charles, Terence Bayler,

Michael Palin, Gwen Taylor, Ron Wood and Henry Woolf. Oh yes, plus somebody named George Harrison.

Idle is the chief madman in charge of this lunacy since he conceived, wrote and codirected (Gary Weis shared insanities on this end) with knowledgeable nuttiness. Innes' music and lyrics are indeed reminiscent and a deft shade shy of overtly incorporating McCartney and Lennon's creations while Aviva Slesin edited with sure fidelity. Weis also photographed confidently as well as producing along with Craig Kellem. Lorne Michaels was executive producer. It's all certifiably crazy satire, naturally, but the point is: it works.

— Earl Davis

"That this program was conceived and written by Eric Idle, one of the zany architects of Britain's Monty Python, should give a clue to the direction of things. Another indication is provided by the man who composed the music—Neil Innes, late of England's wonderfully bizarre Bonzo Dog Band.

"Innes has taken the essence of the various stages of Beatles music and turned it inside out—all to be reincarnated, under various disguises, as Rutles standards."

TV REVIEW

Rutlemania on NBC Tonight

BY JAMES BROWN
Times Staff Writer

At odd moments when the 1960s are unaccountably looking good to us, some might reflect on that profound changing of the cultural guard embodied in the music and life-style of those four mop-topped lads from across the pond... the Rutles.

Yes, the Rutles. Do you remember them? There was Nasty, the intelligent, antisocial one. Then Dirk, the choir-boy cute one. And, let's see... Stig, the quiet one who, rumor has it, "hasn't said a word since 1966." And we mustn't forget Barry, the cuddly, addled one. It was Rutlemania, the Rutland Sound and "A Hard Day's Rut"—the greatest rock and roll band in the history of the planet.

By this time you're undoubtedly aware of who we're really talking about. The Beatles didn't disappear.

What we have here, instead, is a mad, brilliant, remarkably well-constructed rendition of Beatlemania as it never happened, entitled "All You Need Is Cash," a 90-minute special airing tonight at 9:30 on NBC.

The Rutles are the Beatles as seen through the looking glass—wandering along familiar outlines of Beatle history that have been stretched, twisted and pulled into an uproarious, grand scale lampoon.

That this program was conceived and written by Eric Idle, one of the zany architects of Britain's Monty Python, should give a clue to the direction of things. Another indication is provided by the man who composed the music—Neil Innes, late of England's wonderfully bizarre Bonzo Dog Band.

Innes has taken the essence of the various stages of Beatles music and turned it inside out—all to be reincarnated, under various disguises, as Rutles standards. One might recognize "Ouch!" as "Help!" or "Get Up and Go" as "Get Back" or "Cheese and Onions," or "Doubleback Alley" or the countless other fragments that have been pulled together to give this "Pre-Fab Four" a life of their own. It all begins to make sense after a while.

Reconstructing Saga

Idle, with the able assistance of director/cameraman Gary Weis and particularly film editor Aviva Slesin, reconstructs the saga of the Rutles in documentary fashion—appearing on camera as an unctious roving reporter retracing the steps that took Ron Nasty (Innes), Stig O'Hara (Rikki Fataar), Barry Wom (John Halsey) and Dirk Mc-

Quickly (Idle, once again) to fame and fortune.

It all begins in this foul Hamburg club called The Rat Keller where the band played for 15 months before escaping back to England without the fifth Rutle, Leppo.

Then, in 1961, Leggy Mountbatten—a one-legged retail chemist—discovers the group in a Liverpool club and the rest, as they then say, is history. The Rutles conquer England, then Europe, the United States.

They appear on the Ed Sullivan Show (in a marvelously synchronized segment). They give a concert at "Che Stadium" but depart a few hours before the audience shows up. They make films—"A Hard Day's Rut," "Ouch!" and the animated, "Yellow Submarine Sandwich." And there are the memorable albums—"Sgt. Rutter's Only Darts Club Band" and "Tragical History Tour."

But Eric Idle, the venerable reporter, is looking for more. As the chronology continues, he relates how the London Times called Rutles music "the best since Schubert." He talks to that "legendary blues singer," Blind Lemon Pie, who says that "everything I learned, I learned from the Rutles." He asks Mick Jagger and Paul Simon to define what the Rutles meant to their careers. Not much, as it turns out.

Meanwhile, Jagger recalls, Leggy Mountbatten was starting to get a little crazy, "pouring all of his money into bullfighters" and such. It was a sad omen of things to come, as Leggy "tragically" accepts a teaching post in Australia.

Long Step From Reality

The satire covers all of the appropriate ground, through the cosmetic and musical changes, the interviews, personal appearances and news conferences, right up to the final Rutles release, "Let it Rot." It is a long step or two from reality—but the nuances and subtle shading bring most of this fabricated Beatle lore into full dimension.

Particularly impressive are the film sequences recalling the Rutles movie-making years—a perfect reconstruction of the madcap energy of Richard Lester's "A Hard Day's Night" and a stunning animated redesign of "Yellow Submarine."

The only thing that fails to come across—aside from some occasional forays into excess and a few gags that fall flat—is the music. The songs all seem to have been performed through a filter, rendering many of Innes' lyrics inaudible.

There is, however, a Rutles album on the market that should fill in some of the blanks. And their stage persona is a remarkable imitation—from Innes' droll, heavy-lidded, ersatz Lennon to Idle's pop-eyed ersatz McCartney. None of the details have been left to chance.

In addition to Jagger and Simon, other cameo appearances in this Rutles saga include George Harrison (yes, the other "quiet one"), the Rolling Stones' Ron Wood and Bianca Jagger. The cast also includes Saturday Night Live regulars Dan Aykroyd, John Belushi, Bill Murray and Gilda Radner. "All You Need Is Cash" was produced by Craig Kellum with Lorne Michaels as executive producer.

"Arguably and probably the parody version sometimes gets so narrow that the satire edge is just barely visible. Even so, 'Cash' never degenerates to the imitative level of a Beatle look-alike contest or an Elvis clone."

It's the Rutles—and 'All You Need Is Cash!'

A Tragical History Tour Offers a Funny, Sad Insight Into the Way We Were in the '60s



The Fab Four with Ed Sullivan, top left; and the Prefab Four (Dirk, Ron, Stig and Barry), better known as the Rutles.

By Tom Shales

*"Dig it, dig it, dig it,
dig it, dig it, dig it, dig it,
dig it, dig it, dig it."*

—*"Dig It,"*
by The Beatles

There never has been anything remotely like The Rutles. There has, however, been something exactly like The Rutles: The Beatles. That's what makes the Rutles saga so fascinating, so funny, so sad, so funny again, so sad again, then rather funny, then quite sad, then sadly funny, then comically tragic and finally, utterly and maliciously meaningless.

"All You Need Is Cash," the Rutles story in 90 blood-curdling, curd-curdling minutes on NBC (Channel 4) at 9:30



tonight is arguably and probably the most elaborate prank ever played on primetime television and an invaluable forged document of a phenomenon that never really happened.

Eric Idle, the Monty Pythonite who write the script and plays Rutle Dirk, is on the record as stating categorically, "The Rutless story is a legend. A living legend. A legend that will have a lifetime, after lots of other living legends have died."

His scenario, which tells the alleged Rutles story as allegedly as possible,

and the film's direction, by "Saturday Night Live" filmmaker Gary Weis, satirize not only The Beatles and Beatlemania and the era they spanned and defined, but also the machinery that made it happen and in fact the machinery that makes all fads, rages, wonders and living legends of our time happen.

The gap between reality as we remember it and the film's parody version sometimes gets so narrow that the satirical edge is just barely visible. Even so, "Cash" never degenerates to the imitative level of a Beatle look-alike contest or an Elvis clone.

"Cash" lampoons the audience as well as the show it is watching, so that by the time The Rutles get around to the seminal flop "Tragical History Tour," in the I-Am-The-Walrus phase ("piggy in the middle, do a Pooh Pooh," they sing, enigmatically), we get a rousing insight into just how dumb we were in the '60s, just how dumb the '60s were, and just how dumb a little part of each of us will probably always be.

How dumb? The Rutles soundtrack album, a collection of Beatles parody songs by Neil Innes, has already sold 58,000 copies for Warner Bros. Records, which has printed up 120,000 of them. Billboard lists it as No. 153 with a bullet and Cash Box lists it as No. 126 with a bullet AND THE BLOODY SHOW HASN'T EVEN BEEN ON TV YET!

In New York, disc jockeys are play-

ing Beatles songs and Rutles songs side-by-side. Already there are rumors of the Rutles getting back together. And already there are denials. There is some question that they ever really got together in the first place.

Onassis a Fan?

Jacqueline Onassis may become a Rutles fan before it's over, though no one knows for sure.

She does not appear in the program, but these people do: George Harrison, Mick Jagger, Bianca Jagger, Paul Simon and ex-Pythonite Michael Palin. Lorne Michaels, producer of "Saturday Night Live," is executive producer of the special and he has a cameo role, as do "Saturday Night" stalwarts Danny Aykroyd, Bill Murray, Gilda Radner, and John Belushi as "Ron Decline, the most feared promoter in the world."

The part of Rutles press officer Eric Manchester is played by Derek Taylor who IN REAL LIFE WAS ACTUALLY IN FACT the Beatles' press agent for five years. Taylor, 45, now is in charge of creative services for Warner Bros. Records, which picked up the Rutles option when Arista Records dropped it with a thud.

"Eric kept saying 'Rutles Rutles Rutles,'" Taylor recalls in his Hollywood office, a plastic radio dispensing classics from a corner. "But the first I heard of it was from one of The Beatles — Beatle George — who said, 'There's this new band, The Rutles,'

and he showed me a videotape.' "

The tape marked the first public appearance of the "Prefab Four," on Idle's British TV show "Rutland Weekend Television," a series Taylor is hard put to describe except to say, "Whatever 'existentialism' means, there was plenty of that."

Rutland was "the tiniest county in England," Idle explains by phone from an editing booth in New York, and "in 1967, it was declared no longer a place. It became part of Leicestershire."

Taylor eventually got such a bad case of Rutle fever that he had thousands of promotional buttons and postcards printed up. "I'm looking for gold or platinum," he predicts of album sales; gold is 500,000 and platinum 1 million.

The prospect that some consumers will not quite realize all this is parody does not disturb Taylor in the least. "A lot of people, yes, are going to believe there was a Rutles," he says between sips of tea from a cup with the queen's picture on it. "What does that say? It may say that a lot of people are jolly decent."

"Or it may say they are very dumb."

Idle says his film is by no means a savage attack on The Beatles. "It's a savage attack on everybody," he says, riddled with giggles.

"It does put a nice tombstone on The Beatles and say 'Rest in Peace,'" says Taylor. Of course he knows the rest will not really be peaceful. There's "Beatlemania" on the stage, a forthcoming film of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," a forthcoming Ringo Starr NBC special, and plenty of other forthcoming Beatleabilia.

Will any of The Beatles be offended by what they see in "All You Need Is Cash"? Not "Beatle George," obviously, but of the other three, Taylor says, "Yes. I think they might not enjoy it all. Yes. But if there is offense I think it will only be temporary because it's a loving look at something that for many years had life all its own way. Beatlemania can go on and on but they'll never get back together. This Rutles thing makes it clear; having seen this they'll see how daft it would be."

Free Money

"All You Need Is Cash" was not produced for free. Money was involved: \$500,000. Originally it was

intended for the late-night youth audience that tunes in "Saturday Night" but when Idle and Weis (they are thinking of forming Idle-Weis Productions) saw their own rough footage, they knew this was prime enough for prime time.

Only at NBC, of the three networks, could there be found a high-ranking executive with a funny bone hip enough to see what's funny about The Rutles. That chap is Paul L. Klein, NBC's chief programmer. Weis waited with Idle outside a screening room door while, inside, Klein watched a tape of the show. Weis had his ear to the door but couldn't hear any laughter. "I thought, 'aw-oh,'" Weis said later. "But it turns out Klein was sitting near the machine and that he laughs very low and he laughed a lot. I mean, 'Cellarful of Goys'—he's gotta fall on the floor, right?"

Weeks passed.

America matured.

Rutles pre-hype continued at an outdoor restaurant on Santa Monica Boulevard. It seemed the perfect place for a chat with Weis and producer Craig Kellum and a member of the press. Unfortunately, every two minutes all conversation was obliterated by a medley of sirens from police cars and ambulances circling the block as if the SLA headquarters were in the restaurant kitchen.

"You know," said Weis between sirens, "on the 'Tragical History Tour' sequence, one of the British cops on the wall waving his arms was in the original 'Magical Mystery Tour' movie. He came up to me and said, 'Oh yes, I did this with those guys the last time.' I mean, he had no idea, he was so out of it that he thought he was just doing it again. 'Those guys.'"

And when The Rutles run down a fire escape in their first movie, "A Hard Day's Rut," it's the VERY SAME fire escape The Beatles ran down in their first movie, "A Hard Day's Night."

Suddenly the sound of sirens started to come closer again. "I'll tell you who the killer of JFK was!" shouted Weis. "It was—"

But the sirens drowned him out.

Aspirin and Secrets

Idle refuses to be drawn into speculations about deeper meanings of his film. Instead he just chortles, "It's obviously a spoof, isn't it? Ha ha ha ha ha . . ."

This leaves a number of questions unanswered.

What does the film say about Our Time? "That it's now the '70s and will soon be the '80s," says Idle.

What if the public demands more Rutles songs, there being no possibility of more Beatles songs? "Oh well, Neil can come up with another album," says Taylor.

Is there any difference between the American and British versions of the show? Yes. One naughty word to be heard in Great Britain will not be heard here. Also, there may be more references to "inside leg measurements" in the English one because, says Taylor, "inside leg measurements always raise a laugh in England."

Will The Rutles ever get back together again? "I can only echo the words of Mick Jagger," Taylor says. "I hope not."

What did he consume at that outdoor restaurant on Santa Monica Boulevard? Two vanilla milkshakes.



The Rutles arriving in the United States

Epilogue

"All You Need Is Cash" is funnier by far than a number of current movie comedies, including "The World's Greatest Lover," "High Anxiety," "Oh, God" and "The One and Only." But more than that, it is a piquant comic epitaph to the rollicking, frolicking '60s. "It's time to end the '60s," Idle says, but the ironic effect of "Cash" may be to prolong them even further, perhaps so that they will last to the end of the '70s.

Then we'll be able to pretend the '70s never really existed and that Donny and Marie never actually had a weekly television show watched by millions of people.

The Rutles sum it all up when they sing:

"Walky talky man says, hello hello hello with his, Ballerina boots you can tell, he's always on his toes, Hanging from a Christmas tree, creeping like a bogey man, getting up my nose, hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle, piggy in the middle."

Piggy in the middle, indeed.

"Radio stations throughout the U.S. are already playing such poignant Rutle ballads as 'Cheese and Onions.' Worshipers of the original mop-tops may be plunged into an early life crisis by the discovery that their idols can be skewered with such apparent ease."

TELEVISION



The Rutles as pop idols and poseurs:
Monty Python meets the 'Saturday Night' nerds

And Now, Rutlemania!

Is no one safe from this mockery? Broadway's "Over Here!" did a number on the pop-music fancies of the '40s, and the equally devilish "Grease" spread acne all over the memories of the '50s sha-na-na set. But until now, the Beatles, and the generation whose tastes they shaped, somehow seemed exempt from such indignities. After all, put-ons and put-downs made up so much of the Beatles' act—how does one parody a parody? Well, the Briton giveth and the Briton taketh, and this week the British give America a take-off on the Beatle legend that, wondrously enough, is almost as much fun as the original.

NBC's "All You Need Is Cash," an ersatz documentary concocted by Eric Idle of the Monty Pythons, retraces the fabulous career of the "prefab" Rutles, "a musical legend that will last a lunchtime." Dirk McQuickly, Ron Nasty, Barry Wom and Stig O'Hara ("a school-leaver of no fixed hair style") are discovered in a dingy Liverpool disco by one Leggy Mountbatten, an epicene retail chemist with a keen interest in boys. He hated their music, their hair and their presence, Leggy's mum uneasily recalls. But he liked "their trousers. They were . . . uh . . . well, very tight."

Scandal: Launched by Leggy, the Rutles rise to overnight myth-hood, meet the Queen to receive a chirpy "Well done, lads," and give a triumphant concert in New York's Che Stadium (named after the Cuban guerrilla leader, Che Stadium). Stig is falsely rumored to be dead after Nasty supposedly sings the line "I buried Stig" in "I Am the Waitress." Dirk causes a scandal by admitting to the press that he is addicted not only to tea, but to biscuits as well. The Rutles' financial fortunes eventually plummet under the management of Ron Decline, an American promoter whose "only weak spot was dishonesty."

As a spoof of Beatlemania, "All You Need Is Cash" will appeal primarily to those who have acquired the taste for a peculiarly British brand of zaniness. Mick Jagger, Paul Simon and the gang from NBC's "Saturday Night Live" lend their own touches to the prevailing dementia. Jagger is especially memorable deadpanning his explanation for the Rutles' breakup: "Women . . . Just women gettin' in the way." But as a send-up of the entire TV documentary form, and that's really its primary target, the special should tickle just about everyone.

Foot in Mouth: The irrepressible Idle, who plays the documentary's trench-coated narrator, does a wicked impression of David Frost with an almost visi-

ble foot in his mouth. He transports his crew to New Orleans to unearth the black roots of the Rutles' sound, only to learn from old black musicians that *they* had swiped their styles from the Rutles. When Idle finally finds a black elder who claims to have been ripped off by the Rutles, the man's wife gleefully deflates her husband's pretensions by sniffing: "Every time they do a documentary on white music, Frank Sinatra or Lawrence Welk, he claims *he* started it." After a few more such disasters, Idle finally turns churlish. Interviewing Brian Thigh, a dimwitted record executive who rejected the foursome when they were unknowns, Idle castigates him as "a nerd, a cretin, a pillock and a berk."

Sensing a new mania, Warner Bros. is feverishly promoting an album of songs from the show, all written by Python-member Neil Innes. Indeed, radio stations throughout the U.S. are already playing such poignant Rutle ballads as "Cheese and Onions." Worshipers of the original mop-tops may be plunged into an early life crisis by the discovery that their idols can be skewered with such apparent ease. But even if all this means that the Beatles can never attempt a comeback, only the nerdiest of berks should despair. After all, the world now has the Rutles . . . yeah, yeah, yeah!

—HARRY F. WATERS

"Neil Innes and the rest of the jokers responsible for the songs just about hit the nail on the head, proof writ large of how easy it's been for a big major slice of the whole goddam world to actually internalize exactly what the heck the Beatles were musically about."



Rutles Give Us Back Our Birthright (Kinda)

By R. Meltzer

Already the album of the year for '78, *The Rutles* is nothing short of the first new Beatles album in almost a goddam decade, much more of one than *Abbey Road* or *Let It Be* if y'wana get down to it. Y'can listen to it again and again to the point where it's all been memorized, internalized, and forgotten. Playing it *before* seeing the Rutles teevee thing (which you can see on the 22nd) reminded me a heckuva lot of doing likewise with *Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* (just couldn't wait, y'know?) and now that I've seen it the only thing that bothers me about the whole package is this thing they didn't let the music serve as a total enough base for the rest of the shit (Eric Idle's constant boring David Frost routine being too much of an intrusion for its own good). Cause lemme tell ya Neil Innes and the rest of the jokers responsible for the songs just about hit the nail on the head, proof writ large of how easy it's been for a big major slice of the whole goddam world to actually internalize exactly what the heck the Beatles were musically about.

I mean like "Piggy in the Middle" and "Good Times Roll" essentially are "I Am the Walrus" and "Lucy in the Sky," respectively. But if you think it's *too* easy to imitate the later stuff (I mean a total square like Allan Sherman probably could've done it) just check out the early stuff—the absolute fucking Meat of their body of work then as now. "Hold My Hand" is "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" plus "I Saw Her Standing There" plus "She Loves You" plus "All My Loving" plus "Eight Days a Week." A dumb stoopid leap-to-

bizarre-conclusions type whatsit where the John person sees this broad's date with somebody else so it's "a certainty" that the former and her are gonna take the big ride to eternal bliss right on the spot. The boldface arrogance of ridiculous leaps of lovesong logic where anything implies anything else so why not go & imply (check out the original "I'll Get You" as a reference point, all that magnificently hokey "Imagine I'm in love with you" bullshit, John's later "Imagine" being a pointless balls-less mere grocery-list exercise in comparison). Then there's that outasight nonsequitur-in-the-sky in the Rutles' "I Must Be in Love": "Any time/Of the day/I can see/Her face/When I close my eyes." Exultation in truisms incarnate. This is the kind of shit that made the Beatles the true Godards of rock and roll (reverse metaphor), the true fathers of the New Wave. (Stones—I submit—caused no discontinuity in the germplasm, they just borrowed their metaphorical/metalogical focus from the blues: no eruptions in the basic way of *looking at things*, just some all reet hyperconcern with supposedly novel subject matters.)

Of course the Beatles' post-acid stuff was retrograde (as it is in Rutle form as well) but they did manage to come back for a last laugh with their white album which more or less afterstatedly exposed the sham the world at large had fallen for. Thanks to moments here where Innes's perspective is kind of in a white alb mode even stuff like "Love Life" pulls off the minor coup of undermining that love-jive at the end of Quicksilver's "The Fool" (listen to it, ya'll see): Beatles get to one-more-time it in absentia for whatever that's worth . . .

But anyway the greatest service performed by the Rutles in terms of Beatle persona-consciousness is their calling a spade a spade re the weakest link at all stages of Beatle existence: Paul. As Beatles or Rutles it makes no diff, late John/late George was a crocka shit too and Ringo was only Ringo ("Living in Hope" is basic sadsack realpop stoopid), but early/middle/late Paulie was *all* wimpy-simpy-dimpy to the nth. There's even this cut "With a Girl like You" which takes a John song ("If I Fell") and shows ya the damage that McCartney could've wrought had it been him instead. John knew that love was "more than just holding hands" but the Paul singer here wants this gal basically just "to hold and be beside": total wimpout. Idle's heppiest contribution to the teevee thing is his sissy eyebulge headshakes when he's playin Paul. Meantime early John is as rocksolid hot as ever with the "Twist & Shout" number, "Number One," complete with the "ah . . . ah . . . ah . . ." fandango at the end. John was the greatest.

Why do I give such a shit? Because the very idea of *Beatlemania*—an enormous hit right now in L.A. in which the Paul person's getting all the hype—makes me puke. ■

"The music by Neil Innes also has its mimicry, he's written songs like 'Living in Hope' and 'Love Life,' which convey the Beatles' buoyancy and inventiveness even while satirizing it. In fact, the Rutles, rather than being duplicates of the Beatles, seem to dwell in a parallel universe."

Beatle Burlesque

A Little Song, a Little Dance, a Little Seltzer Down Your Pants

MEDIUM COOL

TELEVISION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

By James Wolcott

Eric Idle, with his panicky eyes and sappy-serene "What, Me Worry?" smile, is the perfect narrator for *All You Need Is Cash*, a send-up of Beatles nostalgia that airs Wednesday, March 22, on NBC. Parodying Tony Palmer's globe-trotting technique in the pop-music documentary *All You Need Is Love*, Idle travels everywhere to trace the rise and fall of the Rutles, "a musical legend that will last a lunchtime." He visits the Rat Keller in Hamburg, where a lot of the original rats still prosper (one crawls up his trouser leg). It was in this pesthole that the Rutles, "far from home and far from talented," created a sound that eventually enthralled the world. From Hamburg, Idle goes to New Orleans to interview blues singer Blind Lemon Pye; later, wearing an umbrella-hat in the drumming rain, he stands in front of Che Stadium, where the band once played to 50,000 screaming nubiles. The man never stops—he runs after the camera, steps in puddles, interviews rock celebrities and Rutles experts (including an oracular rock critic who sounds like Jonathan Cott with a clogged nostril). Idle even provokes one of his subjects into suicide by calling him a duck-brained twit. Not surprisingly, all this whooshing about leaves him a little dazed. At one point Idle says solemnly, "Here in Liverpool . . ." then turns to discover the Manhattan skyline looming before him.

It's a star-crammed special. Along with Idle—who wrote and co-directed *All You Need*, and also portrays bassist Dirk McQuickly—are Python alumni Michael Palin and Neil Innes. From *Saturday Night Live*, John Belushi throws his considerable weight around as the sadistic entrepreneur, Ron Decline; Bill Murray does a high-decibel turn as Bill Murray the K; and Gilda Radner schleps down the street carrying a copy of *The Village Voice* (smart girl). There are also film clips featuring David Frost, Bob Dylan, and Ed Sullivan, and cameo appearances by Paul Simon, Mick and Bianca Jagger, Ron Wood, and George Harrison. Paul and Mick are smug little goobers, but droopy-lidded Bianca is surprisingly funny—even when she swigs champagne from the bottle, her performance has a narcissistic whorehouse languor. The stars fit in smoothly, for *All You Need* is a pop panorama, taking us from *Meet the Rutles* to *Sgt. Rutler's Dart Club Band*, from *Tragical History Tour* to the valedictory *Let It Rot*. In the '70s, the group splits up and Idle's McQuickly becomes a punker; he wears a gigantic safety pin through his head and pukes beer at the camera.

The parodies of Beatles movies have a fun-house silliness.



The Rutles: a musical legend that will last a lunchtime

Co-director Gary Weis, who's done shorts for *Saturday Night Live*, captures beautifully the lyrical jump-cutting of *A Hard Day's Night*, the candy-colored surrealism of *Help!*, and the costume-party harlequinade of *Magical Mystery Tour*. There's even a take-off on Yoko Ono's arty films that contains an erotic joke worthy of Bunuel: a glimpse of a foot fondling a bicycle seat. The music by Neil Innes also has its mimicry, he's written songs like "Living in Hope" and "Love Life," which convey the Beatles' buoyancy and inventiveness even while satirizing it. In fact, the Rutles, rather than being duplicates of the Beatles, seem to dwell in a parallel universe. The high point of the movie is an "I Am the Walrus" number called "Piggy in the Middle": as the music lurches like a drunken carnival, bobbies and nuns and crows sway in the background. . . it's a Lewis Carroll operetta.

As comedy, *All You Need* doesn't have the lewd edge of *Rock Follies*; it's sexlessly endearing. By sticking to its Mad-parody documentary format, the show misses the Balzacian splendors and miseries of sudden upward mobility. Instead, the Rutles are cut-out dolls, and we watch their exploits from a discreet, smirky distance. More important, Eric Idle needs to lose his love of the familiar. Like Mel Brooks, he enjoys rummaging through the dumb-joke drawer, and after a while you feel as if you're being pelted with moldy oldies. But the major disappointment of the evening is that Idle never puts on a dress and prisses about. What a let-down. It's like Lorraine Newman withholding her smile, or Lindsay Wagner refusing to run in slow motion. That aside, *All You Need Is Cash* is a smart, rowdy entertainment—you'd have to be a clam not to enjoy it.

"The parody is best when focused on specific products such as the songs or the movies ('A Hard Day's Rut,' 'Ouch!' and 'Let It Rot'). The music and lyrics, all written by Mr. Innes, smartly capture the essence of the Beatles and then, ever so cleverly, turn it to mush."



TV: Naughty 'Rutles' Cash In on the Beatles

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR

IF THE BEATLES have finally become ripe for parody, the once and former kings of pop music and international fads are not likely to get a cheekier sendup than "The Rutles," subtitled "All You Need Is Cash," on NBC tonight at 9:30. The production was written by Eric Idle, distinguished graduate of "Monty Python's Flying Circus." The executive producer is Lorne Michaels, the producer of NBC's "Saturday Night Live."

Tackling a legend that "will live long after other living legends have died," the script touches on just about every significant Beatles highlight, leaving each one genially tarnished. The main source of inspiration would appear to be a documentary called "All You Need Is Love," which was shown on WNEW/Channel 5 several weeks ago.

That straightforward biography included, for instance, an interview with the mother of Brian Epstein, the group's manager in the days of ascendancy. Mrs. Epstein observed that her son provided "quite a father figure" for the boys. In "The Rutles," the manager becomes Leggy Mountbatten, a homosexual. Television's Brian Fowl has the following conversation with Leggy's mother, Iris:

Mrs. Mountbatten: "Leggy told me he'd been to see these young men in a dark cellar." Did he like their music? "No, he hated it." What did he like? "Well [pause], their trousers." What about their trousers? "Well, they were very [pause] tight." And so on, into realms of naughtiness rare for American prime time.

All names, of course, have been changed for the sole purpose of avoiding lawsuits. But Ron Nasty (Neil Innes), author of "Out of Me Head," bears a keen resemblance to John Len-

non, particularly when he marries a rather odd woman who insists on wearing a Nazi uniform. Dirk McQuickly (Mr. Idle) nicely suggests a boyishly vacuous Paul McCartney, Stig O'Hara (Ricky Fataar) a strangely quiet George Harrison and Barry Wom (John Halsey) a troglodytic Ringo Starr. Mr. Idle also plays the narrator, a roving television reporter who has difficulty keeping up with his cameras as they keep moving to create a you-are-there illusion dear to the hearts of television consultants.

Most of the story is there, from cellars in Liverpool and Germany (with real rats in the Ratkeller Club) to the final disintegration over business arrangements ("the beginning of a golden age for lawyers"). Leggy writes his autobiography, "A Cellar Full of Goys." The London Times calls Rutles music "the best since Schubert." The group conquers America on "The Ed Sullivan Show" and at New York's Che Stadium.

Of course, even parody can go so far. Brian Epstein committed suicide. The Rutles' Leggy disappears by accepting a teaching post in Australia. And "All You Need Is Cash" is no less trendy and exploitative than its own targets. On hand as guest star are Paul Simon, doing his deadpan cool routine; Mick Jagger, whose vaunted androgyny is melting into an image of an aging floozy, and his wife, Bianca, who is merely pointless.

The parody is best when focused on specific products, such as the songs or the movies ("A Hard Day's Rut," "Ouch!" and "Let It Rot"). The music and lyrics, all written by Mr. Innes, smartly capture the essence of the Beatles and then, ever so cleverly, turn it to mush.

What happened to the Rutles? Nasty and his wife, Chastity, took to such things as sitting under a bathroom shower, where, "by using of plumbing, we hope to demonstrate the world is a sewer." Opportunistic Dirk formed a new group called the Punk Floyd; Barry went into hairdressing, and Mystical Stig became a stewardess for Air India. Will they ever get back together again? "I hope not," says Mr. Jagger. "The Rutles" is uneven and, here and there, perhaps a bit tasteless, but its methods are infinitely preferable to the embalming processes being used in ripoffs such as the stage concoction called "Beatlemania."

[illegible]

24 pages of Rutlemanian in Black & White!

